



234 N. Central Avenue
Suite 6400
Phoenix, AZ 85004-2187
Phone: 602-506-2930
Fax: 602-506-4692
www.maricopa.gov/parks

MEMORANDUM

Date: December 31, 2007
To: Parks and Recreation Department Commissioners
From: R.J. Cardin, Director
Re: **Director's Summary of Current Events**

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "R.J. Cardin".

Listed below are issues that the department has been involved with since the November 13, 2007 Director's Summary.

Director

A draft addendum to the Lake Pleasant Master Plan: Agua Fria Conservation Area is in the review process. Four major findings have been identified and recommendations are being formulated.

Finding 1

Based on the site analysis, including numerous site visits, comparisons with the 1995 Master Plan Data and the public input, there is clear evidence that riparian and natural resources have been significantly degraded. In addition, many of the archaeological sites have been disturbed and damaged.

Finding 2

Vehicular access to the water's edge, or at least near the edge, appears to be important to many of the visitors who currently use the area in a responsible manner. Many of the anglers and other boaters trailer small boats, canoes and kayaks to launch in the water at this "hot" fishing spot. Other visitors, such as hikers, picnickers and birders, also find their experience is enhanced near the water's edge. This access issue is particularly problematic during the eagle closure period (December 15 through June 15) when the northern portion of the lake cannot be accessed via boat. To alleviate this problem, the partners are pursuing additional avenues to provide some level of seasonal access to the area.

Finding 3

It is clear from both public input and professional experience that more on-site presence would be a primary deterrent to resource damage and illegal activity in the area.

Finding 4

Full or even partial implementation of the recommendations will require significant financial resources. In order to achieve any measure of success in restoring the area while providing public access will require a commitment of financial and human resources from all partners that have a stake in the area.

The El Rio Water Course Master Plan implementation is underway. On December 5, 2007 the Administrative Committee met to: 1) Determine the Technical Committee membership; and 2) Identify expectations for Technical Committee, including tasks, deliverables and technical expertise. It was determined the Technical Committee should include representation from planning, community & recreation services, engineering and finance departments.

The role of the Administrative Committee, as outlined in the El Rio MOU, directs the Technical Committee in developing the implementation strategy and then recommends the appropriate

implementation and funding mechanism to the Steering Committee. The Administrative Committee consists of the following members: City Manager of Avondale; Town Manager of Buckeye; City Manager of Goodyear; Chief Engineer and General Manager of the Flood Control District; Director of Maricopa County Parks and Recreation; Director of Maricopa County Planning and Development; and the chairperson of the Technical Committee.

Scorpion Bay Marina is celebrating the beginning of the dock construction. The celebration will be on January 17, at 1:00p.m. – location is 10970 W. Peninsula Road, Morristown (Lake Pleasant).

Budget

The Office of Management & Budget has scheduled its kickoff meeting for January 3rd. It is anticipated that budgets will be submitted with proposed 5%, 10% and 15% reduction alternatives. A pre-meeting was held with our budget analyst and certain agreements were made.

It is anticipated in this difficult year that the budget at the Lake will grow to accommodate certain reductions to the general and enhancement funds. We have received preliminary indications that we may submit proposals outside of the target.

Superintendent Report

Spur Cross Ranch Conservation Area (SCRCA): Work continues on our solar oasis project with it 95% complete. U.S. Fish & Wildlife and AZ Game & Fish personnel were very impressed during a recent inspection tour. Native fish (pupfish & topminnow) will be stocked in March of 2008. The artificial wetland component of this project continues with staff researching appropriate flora and plant material sources. This project is a cooperative project between the Department, Game & Fish and the United States Fish and Wildlife Service to create a refugia pond in the mesquite bosque north of the old ranch site.

Staff continues to work with our contract water rights specialist in order to produce an "in stream flow" claim on Cave Creek and to transfer all existing claims on the property to the county.

Staff is working with an Eagle Scout candidate to design a project that will accomplish needed trail maintenance activities on the Black Mountain Summit trail.

21 interpretive programs were offered during the month of December.

Cave Creek Mountain Regional Park: 614 people took guided horse rides from the trail ride concession in November, attracting 185 groups to the park. Owners state that bookings are down from last year; they attribute this decrease in attendance to the slower economy.

16 different interpretive programs were offered over the past two months, with a total of 105 attendees. The most popular programs were ones offered around the Thanksgiving holiday with approximately 10% of interpretive program attendees were repeat attendees. A highlight was a special hike just for the Peoria Senior Center.

Park hosts have received positive feedback from regular visitors about the 'change in presence of staff in the park'. Visitors say they appreciate the increased visibility on the trails, roads and campgrounds. Many visitors have reported they are glad to see all the programs being offered and the trail improvements that were finished this fall.

Interviews for Park Maintenance Worker were conducted and the successful candidate will start in mid-January.

Park staff has stepped up presence at Adobe Dam Regional Park and will continue to rove the roadway and remove trash from the Park on a weekly basis. The Department is working with Flood Control to set up a meeting in January about signage and potential additional fencing for Adobe.

Usery Mountain Regional Park: With Ranger Jenny Work transferring to the DOC, park staff and park hosts presented 57 interpretive programs during November & December. Last spring's popular "Just for Kids" program "Toddler Cruise" was started back up again after the summer heat during Thanksgiving.

A new host at Usery, bird watching expert and Audubon member Sandy Hornbaker, is partnering with the park supervisor to create birding programs of all sorts to promote the nation's new top nature hobby: bird watching and backyard birding. Sandy is also leading hikes each month called Birding vs. Bird Watching.

McDowell Mountain Regional Park: McDowell hosted the first Dawn to Dusk endurance mountain bike race. The race was held in spite of the park receiving nearly four inches of rain beginning 24 hours before the race and continuing all race day. More than 200 competitors endured rain, cold temperatures and wind during the ten hours of riding.

Visiting Interpretive Ranger Bill Talboys gave two programs and spent valuable time with new McDowell Interpretive Ranger Emily Habinck.

The MBAA (Mountain Bike Association of Arizona) will begin its spring state championship series at McDowell Mountain Park. This year that race will be conducted by riding the opposite direction on the competitive track loops. The reverse direction of racing will be assisted by the park reversing direction for two weeks leading up to the day of the race.

Solar lighting was purchased and installed at the park to provide light on the new entrance sign near the main park entrance. The park staff and volunteers fabricated a concrete base and rebar cage to contain the solar panel, battery and light to illuminate the sign and not lose the lighting kit to theft.

San Tan Mountain Regional Park: The weather may have dampened things a bit, but it hasn't slowed things down around the park. Our "Hiking with the Stars" Moonlight Hike in November attracted 81 visitors to explore the nightlife at San Tan. Ranger Doc from White Tank gave a spectacular presentation on venomous creatures and creepy crawlies to 19 eager park visitors in December. The San Tan staff is dedicated to improving the quality of life and encouraging youth to take a more active role in the outdoors/environment and led several educational tours for local schools and community groups in November/December.

The San Tan family grows once again. We are happy to welcome and open our doors to the critters (Gila monster, Mojave rattlesnake and gopher snake) from Usery. They will be temporarily housed at San Tan until their new home (visitor center) is built.

The successful installation of the third hitching post has been completed near the park trailhead to the delight of the equestrian visitors. In addition, an equestrian water center has been established near the horse-staging area.

Progress on the horse-staging/overflow parking lot expansion is underway. The cultural resource survey has been completed and we recently received the okay to move forward with the project. The San Tan maintenance worker will diligently work to clear the area and safely transport the vegetation (within the expansion area) to areas of need within the park.

Estrella Mountain Regional Park: Phoenix International Raceway Nextel Cup was November 9th and 10th. The park fared well. There were several campers that used the main part of the park to camp in this year and enjoyed their stay.

The Dust Devil Mountain Bike Race on November 17th went quite well this year. Many riders gave positive comments on the competitive track repairs that occurred a few weeks before the race.

The Estrella staff has been focusing on safety issues in and around the park. The compound area has been inspected and corrected. Trees all around the park have been trimmed back from the roads, curves and parking areas to improve driving visibility.

Interpretive programming has been creative and strong. Preparations are being made for a larger event January 26th called Western Heritage Day. There are also plans to make a bigger programming push for the week around Super Bowl Sunday.

White Tank Mountain Regional Park: The Waterfall trail re-opened at the end of December with limited use. The decomposed granite will be installed sometime early summer which means the trail is not barrier free until the application of the granite occurs. The trail looks amazing and will offer greater opportunities than before for education. In addition, the park supervisor and interpretive ranger are finishing up the interpretive signs information for the trail which will explain the petroglyphs and history along the way.

MCDOT is still scheduled to improve the entry roadway. The first step will be to lengthen the existing cattle guard and then widen the roadway itself.

Archery deer hunting season has begun and the park was extremely busy on opening day. Arizona Game and Fish Department has been working on a deer population survey for the past year and we will be awaiting the results.

Lake Pleasant Regional Park: Apache Bass completed a clean-up at the 10-lane on December 15. Shadow Mountain High School brought out 40 students from their senior class to paint 25 trash barrels in our group campground. They did an excellent job and were very artistic by adding petroglyph designs to each barrel.

The maintenance staffs were busy completing the following projects: 14 port-a-johns were taken out of service. The flooring had to be replaced so they would be to code for environmental service issues. Replaced and installed water fountains in Road Runner campground and the Visitor Center to be ADA compliant. Replaced and installed a new flagpole rope at the main entry station.

Skipper Marina and Zona (telephone provider) have proposed to install fiber optic hard lines to the Operation Center at no cost to the department. In reviewing the request, the Park Supervisor requested that fiber optic lines be installed at the Visitor Center and Main Entry Station as well at no cost to the department. The Interpretive Ranger and Park Supervisor are continuing to work with Peoria on a Recreational IGA, which will include paddle craft programs sponsored by the Park and Peoria. The final draft has been submitted.

The Events Coordinator is currently planning the Dam Run and Safe Boating Celebration. She is also developing a Protect Your Natural Resources Presentation for department staff to inform them of how the new program works.

Desert Outdoor Center: The DOC has acquired a booth at the Bridal Fashion Debut, which will be held in Scottsdale on January 5th and 6th, 2008. This event will enable us to highlight the DOC's amenities and opportunities as a venue for weddings. Presently about two weddings are held annually at the DOC.

In partnership with the Phoenix Zoo and the Arizona Association for Environmental Education, the DOC will be sponsoring a roundtable discussion, public presentation and workshop by Dr. Joseph Cornell on 10-11 January 2008. The roundtable and public presentation will be at the Phoenix Zoo on Friday (10th), and the workshop at the DOC on Saturday (11th). Dr. Cornell's book, *Sharing Nature With Children*, is a blueprint for utilizing experiential learning to convey environmental and nature content to young learners.

To review DOC classes and incorporate significant elements of experiential and self-discovery learning into curriculum (ongoing through Sept 2008). To act as curriculum resource to assist other educational entities incorporates experiential and self-discovery components into curriculum, and develops best practices. (ongoing through Sept 2008).

Contract Updates

Lake Pleasant Regional Park: The 9th Circuit Court ruled in favor of County/BOR/Lake Pleasant Marina Partners in November 2007. Progress continues with construction of the new marina - a portion of the piers have been installed; wave attenuators are ready to be put into place; ground excavation and blasting continues.

Discussions continue with the City of Peoria to relocate their fire department located at Pleasant Harbor Marina to Lake Pleasant Regional Park. If approved, this should result in overall improvement in response times throughout the Park.

Buckeye Hills Regional Park: The Proposal received as a result of the RFP for operation of the shooting complex was rejected. Parks has since entered into discussion with the Town of Buckeye to enter into an IGA in which they would manage, operate and maintain the shooting complex.

Cave Creek Mountain Regional Park: The Bureau of Land Management has approved an extension of their lease with Parks for an additional 25 years as the patent process continues.

Adobe Dam Regional Park: Two (2) Proposals were received and are being evaluated for the management, operation and maintenance of the Aquatic Facility currently known as Waterworld Safari. The current Agreement terminates in October 2008.

Permitting discussions continue with the Flood Control District and the City of Phoenix re: Fort Adobe Paintball Complex.

Park wide: An RFP has been released for the award of a drink vending concession. The Pre-Proposal Conference is scheduled for January 17, 2008.

Grant Updates

We have submitted two grant applications with Arizona Game and Fish.

White Tank Regional Park is requesting Heritage-Urban Wildlife funding for a wildlife viewing pond which will support a diverse avian and general wildlife population. The water will be drawn by a windmill from an existing well. The pond will serve as an interpretive site for the expansion of the education programs already in place at the park. Grant amount request is \$48,200, match at \$9,200 making the total cost of the project \$57,400.

Desert Outdoor Center is requesting Heritage Environmental Education funds to purchase 25 monocular microscopes and 25 stereo microscopes to help increase student's learning and knowledge of the environment from natural history to cultural sciences. Grant dollars requested is \$7,500, match at \$550 making the total project costs at \$8,050.

Arizona Game and Fish funding notification is expected to be around May, 2008.

Estrella Regional Mountain Park has requested \$60,000 educational funding through the Ak-Chin Indian Community for an interpretive display. The Park desires to design and construct built-in cases, portable storyboards, interactive kiosks, models and audiovisual interpretive display for ecosystem environmental and cultural education and awareness at their new visitor center.

Marketing Updates

On December 10, Parks submitted a proposal to the National Recreation and Parks Association to present a session on *Incorporating green development into your park systems* at the 2008 Congress Education Session in October 2008. The proposal is currently pending review and successful candidates will be notified by April 30, 2008.

Awards

This year proved to be an award winning year for Maricopa County's Parks and Recreation Department. During 2007, Parks was recognized by several organizations for their award winning programs, innovative initiatives and for providing outstanding customer service. Awards received include:

- **Valley Forward's 27th Annual Environmental Excellence Awards**
 - John Gunn, Park Supervisor and Kevin Smith, Interpretive Ranger for Spur Cross Ranch Conservation Area along with Chris Coover, Trails Manager, submitted an application for *Open Space and*

Connectivity Trails – Maricopa County Spur Cross Trail System. The program received an Award of Merit.

- Terry Gerber, Interpretive Ranger for Lake Pleasant Regional Park, submitted an application for *Environmental Education / Communication – Public Sector – Programs with Purpose – Interpretive Ranger Programs*. The program received an Award of Merit.
- **Westmarc's 15th Annual Best of the West Awards**
 - Terry Gerber, Interpretive Ranger for Lake Pleasant Regional Park, submitted an application for *Interpretive Programming*. The program received an Honorable Mention in the Attractions, Destinations and Tourism category.
- **New Times Best of Phoenix Awards – Reader's Choice**
 - The public submitted the Maricopa County Parks and Recreation Department for *Best Creative Way to Take a Hike* and the department walked away with the Reader's Choice Award!
 - The public submitted San Tan Mountain Regional Park for the *Best Easy Mountain Bike Ride*. San Tan was selected by the readers and is now listed as a Reader's Choice winner for the best easy mountain bike ride!
- **National Association of Counties**
 - Fourth Annual County Leadership in Conservation Awards Program - Gant Wegner, Maricopa County Flood Control District, Jennifer Waller, Parks Superintendent and Dawna Taylor, Public Information Officer has submitted a combined nomination for the *El Rio Project* and are awaiting results.

Coming and Going in Human Resources

The following people recently left Parks; Bill Scalzo, Chief Community Services Officer, retired after 15 and a half years and Frank Wodiuk, Intern

The following people have been hired at Parks; Emily Habinck, Interpretive Ranger at McDowell Regional Park; Michael Martinez, Electrician with the Construction Crew at Durango; Joshua Barnes, new Trails Technician with the Trails Crew at Durango and Mark Paulat, new Trails Technician with the Trails Crew at Durango.

We are currently recruiting for; Park Office Assistant at Cave Creek and Park Supervisor at Estrella Park.

Interviews are scheduled on January 10, 2008, for the vacant Temporary Contact Station Assistant position at the Lake.